

A "Blackledge story" for Mike from Penn - Merry Christmas! [written 12-18-16]

CHARM

As a 22 year old, my twin sister and I would soon be attending a bridal shower given by our bridesmaid Phyllis. But I was concerned. Not only that, I was downright worried. Why in the world did Phyllis have to invite our mother, of all people, to the shower? What did Mother have in common with any friends of Patti and me?

"WHY do you think Phyllis invited our mother?" I demanded of my twin as we drove to Rice for morning classes.

"Oh, who knows?" she said with a nonchalant shrug. "I think they usually do that for bridal showers. It's etiquette, I suppose."

Patti didn't get it. She just didn't seem to realize the danger.

I wrote in my diary and explained that Mother really didn't belong at the shower. She didn't know our friends, not really. I was used to her on her Mother throne ordering us kids to do chores: like wash the ring around the bathtub or remember to put your dirty clothes into the hamper, or clear the table. Having Mother there, at the bridal shower, in the midst of our close friends, would be embarrassing.

Most of all, Mother didn't look like other mothers. She was what you call, dowdy. Her hair was short, grey, and combed forward; her wardrobe was non-existent; she didn't wear lipstick or jewelry; and she spent her rare free time typing and studying books in her sacred bedroom. One time I knocked on her bedroom door, quaking inside with a serious problem - at least to me. I needed love and advice. Granted, it was late at night. The incessant typewriter keys from within never missed a rhythmic click.

"Get outta here!" Mother yelled out, "Give me a little peace and quiet!"

Good Lord. Other mothers could never be half that mean.

There was a remaining glimmer of hope that Mother wouldn't accept the bridal shower invitation since she didn't drive and wouldn't have a mode of transportation to the upcoming shower. (No way was 'volunteering'). I checked in with Daddy who assured me that yes, Mother was going and he'd drive Mother to the bridal shower. Gad. What rotten luck.

The evening of the shower arrived. Everyone was there. Including Mother. Phyllis had her home decorated with balloons, cake, ribbons, gifts and games. The room was alive and festive with happy chatter. We sat in fold-up chairs arranged into a large circle. Mother sat across the room from me between two of my good friends. I watched her every move and gesture, anticipating anything but good. She was talking, nodding, smiling, even laughing at times. I didn't know what to make of it. Every time I glanced over at Mother, she was chatting with one friend of mine